

REMARKS

In view of the following remarks and foregoing amendments, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-19 are pending at the time of this action, with claims 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 16, and 18 being independent. Claims 1-15, 18, and 19 are allowed.

Claim 16 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as allegedly failing to comply with the written description requirement.

Claim 16 stands objected to because of informalities.

Claims 16 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Pettijohn et al. (U.S. Patent # 5,149,954) and Aswell et al. (U.S. Patent # 6,943,721).

Claims 16-17 are currently canceled. Accordingly, the rejections and objections to claims 16-17 are now moot.

Conclusion

Applicants request that the Examiner issues a notice of allowance. The foregoing comments made with respect to the positions taken by the Examiner are not to be construed as acquiescence with other positions of the Examiner that have not been explicitly contested. Accordingly, the arguments for patentability of a claim should not be construed as implying that there are not other valid reasons for patentability of that claim or other claims.

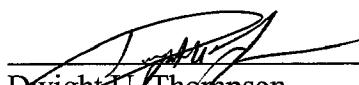
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Respectfully submitted,

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